

Reagan win may mean end of cents, JFK halves

By Roger Boye

Ronald Reagan's election portends major changes in the nation's coinage if the new administration supports two recommendations made in the waning days of Gerald Ford's presidency.

Significantly, the government possibly might halt production of Lincoln cents sometime in the next four years, forcing merchants to round off prices to the nearest nickel. In addition, it might also abolish Kennedy half-dollars.

Both proposals were made by then Treasury Secretary William Simon in early 1977, two weeks before the Republicans left office. Simon debunked the continued production of Lincoln cents, saying it made little economic sense.

Officials working for President Carter rejected Simon's reasoning, insisting instead that elimination of the cent would prove a boon for inflation. Without a cent, businessmen would tend to round up prices to the nearest nickel, rather than round them down.

Experts say it's "anyone's guess" what the Reagan administration will recommend concerning the Lincoln cent. The President-elect wants to cut the size of the federal government, and elimination of the cent would save millions of dollars in metal costs and make possible a huge reduction in the mint's production staff. That's because Lincoln cents account for more than 75 per cent of all U.S. coinage.

On the other hand, President-elect Reagan probably would support retention of the cent if



Obverse of 1980 Julian "protest medal."

he believed its elimination would increase inflation, as the Carter administration suggests. In that case, he might favor a new alloy.

As for the Kennedy half-dollar, almost everyone agrees it serves no useful purpose in the coinage system and its elimination may not be far off.

Most coinage changes require Congressional approval.

● Indiana resident Robert W. Julian has issued his fourth annual "protest medal" and is selling it to collectors. The 1980 version satirizes the American military by depicting Gen. Douglas MacArthur on one side, and a shirtless and blindfolded Uncle Sam carrying an antique weapon on the other side.

To order the 2½-inch bronze medal struck by the Medallic Art Co., send \$9.95 per medal by Nov. 30 to Defense Medal, Box 725, Logansport, Ind. 46947. Julian says deliveries should begin in late January.